Fort Collins law protects homosexuals; Springs considers related issue

Associated Press

FORT COLLINS — The Fort Collins City Council has voted to extend anti-discrimination protection to homosexuals.

The council gave final approval to the ordinance Tuesday. It protects sexual orientation — defined as actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality and asexuality — from discrimination.

Public testimony Tuesday focused on the question of sexual orientation. About 35 speakers supported the ordinance, while 29 spoke in opposition.

Opponents of the ordinance said homosexuality is immoral and that the law would infringe on their freedom of religion.

"I think it's a sad day for Fort Collins," said Jim Greenacre, a pastor at Front Range Baptist Church.

Supporters said the ordinance is needed to make all people feel welcome and safe in Fort Collins. "This is not an endorsement of gay or lesbian life but an affirmation of the basic humanity that belongs to all of us," Eric Delehoy said.

Greenacre said the next step in fighting the law would probably be a petition drive to put the matter to a vote. Ten years ago, a similar proposal was defeated in a bitter campaign.

A similar resolution passed by the Colorado Springs City Council last May may be re-evaluated after questions raised recently by Colorado for Family Values, the organization behind Amendment 2. The religious group took issue with the inclusion of the word "sexual" in the resolution.

In part, the Zero Tolerance Resolution states the Colorado Springs City Council "will have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination of a racial, ethnic, sexual or religious nature."

Colorado Springs Councilman Dawson Hubert has since offered an amended statement, inspired by concerns voiced by Colorado for Family Values, that reads, "the City Council will have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination." Hubert's proposal could be presented to the council Tuesday. If the council agrees to consider the proposal, it will appear on the March 24 meeting agenda.

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a lower, uniform blood-alcohol limit, under the threat of pulling federal transportation funding from states that don't comply. It's little surprise, in part, because the president had indicated such an inclination earlier on, and in part because this administration generally seems to have no more qualms than some of its predecessors when it comes to usurping the power of individual states.

Then again, the same could well be said of the U.S. Senate, which voted overwhelmingly Wednesday morning to do the president's bidding on this matter. To Colorado's credit, Republican Sens. Ben Nighthorse Campbell and Wayne Allard voted against this ill-advised measure, an amendment to a pending transportation funding bill.

It so happens that the administration-Senate proposal would peg allowable blood alcohol at a lower level, .08 percent, than currently allowed in most states. Colorado's threshhold for being charged with driving under the influence is .10 percent. A lesser charge applies to drivers with .05 percent alcohol in their blood.

Which is the wisest limit is an interesting question in itself. Some contend that we're nearing the point of allowing no alcohol consumption at all for someone who's about to drive. Some others would contend that's just as well. Ultimately, that's a separate debate.

What shouldn't be open to dispute, though, is that it should be up to each state to decide. Not only is it more practical to defer to different climes on considerations such as rules of the road, but also, it's constitutional. That's a principle worth preserving however much it may fall into the shadow of the political passions of the moment. If only enough senators of either major party could have seen it that way.

Instead, their peers were treated to the ritual reflexes of Washington: photos of drunken-driving victims, courtesy of Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., and this observation from Ohio Republican Sen. Mike Dewine, dismissing constitutional concerns about states' rights: "Yes, this is a question of rights — the right to live, and the right to